

**[Robert William Little]**

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Pioneer Experiences and

Cowboy Tales of Early Days.

EDITORIAL FIELD COPY

by

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UVALDE COUNTY, DISTRICT #10

[?]

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ROBERT WILLIAM LITTLE

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"I was born in Guadalupe County on Valentine day in 1864 and I've been a plumb good Valentine ever since. Born on my father's ranch of course. It was all open range clear to the coast and we had lots of cattle, horses and hogs. Everything that went with a ranch. I was the only boy in the family and I started going out on the roundups when I was 15 years old. I was sort of spoilt took, as I had five sisters, though two of them were half-sisters.

"I don't remember much about my father; he died when I was only two or three years old. His name was William Wallace Little. After I got old enough, I began helping mother with the stock that my father had left her. Right there is where the old LIT brand started. They had cattle and horses. My mother Married Y. P. Outlaw a little later and I stayed with them till I was about fifteen or sixteen years old before I pulled out for good. He was a good man, though and over-average stepfather. C12 - Texas

"When I was little, going to school, I picked out a little girl that was my sweetie. I had to ride horseback, but when I got with her I'd get off my horse and lead him and walk with her. She was a little black-headed, black-eyed thing and I thought she was about the prettiest thing I ever saw. I just naturally loved her because she was my type and when I was about 16 and she was [15?], we were engaged. We lived in 2 about a half-mile of each other and I could see her pretty often. But, I drifted off and we got separated and never married. I still love her because she in a fine woman. My wife [goesto?] visit her every now and then, but I haven't seen her in many, many years.

"I sort of run off from home when I first left. We lived in about eight miles of Seguin. They were building this new railroad down to Laredo and I helped build that last mile of railroad there now. I was a good team driver and they [put?] me on the last job finishing up. I was just a kid, but I was a sort of professional with a team. That was the first job I ever had away from home. While I was working there, somebody got to raiding the horse herd at nights. They told me it was Indians, but I knew better. I had seen a fine saddle hanging

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up in the brush a short ways from our camp and I know it was either Mexicans or white rustlers.

“There had been two boys run away from Seguin for cow stealing. They were from a fine family, too, but they took to that live. I knew them well. Well, they come into camp one night for something to eat. They had been away from home three or four years when they showed up at this camp, but I knowed 'em. I give 'em something to eat, and one of them had one of the best saddles I ever looked at. He told me he had just bought it in Laredo that day. If I'd been a thief, I'd have stole that saddle, myself.

“After I went back home, I never said nothing about it for I had come back to see that little black-eyed girl I was telling you about. It was two or three years from then that both of those brothers died from t.b. One of them died away from home and the other one got so low, they sent for him and brought him home before he died.

“In September, [1883?], we sold out that ranch in Guadalupe County and moved to Frio County. The heirs still own that place down there. I took the cattle and horses down to the new ranch for them. There was something 3 like one-hundred and fifty head of cattle and their saddle horse. We got there just in time to get mixed up in the fence-cutting outfit. It was worse there than anywhere I ever was in my live. They was going to hold that down, but they couldn't do it. They cut one pasture fence there, that I know of, twice between each post for at least ten miles. You know they passed a law — made it a penitentiary offence for fence cutters— for it got to where they were so bad about it that the fence-builders had to make it hard on them and they finally broke it up. Of course, where there was so much money to build right back with and keep building more fences, they had the money to fight it with, too.

“After that, I went from Guadalupe County with a herd up the trail for W. C. Irvin. We started two herds and when we got to San Antonio, where San [?] Pedro Springs is, they cut them into two herds. One went to Kansas and tone went to LaSalle County, to the

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old Irvin Ranch. I went through with two-thousand steers and I have been with many a stampede but the worst one I was ever with was right there where Marion is now, about twenty miles on the other side of San Antonio. That was by far the worst stampede I was ever in. You couldn't hold 'em at all. We was there three or four days rounding up. Thunder and lightning — a big storm — was the cause of them running. There was about thirteen or fourteen men in the outfit and it was at night. That was one of the worst electrical storms and hardest rains I ever saw in this country.

“A Negro was riding right in from of me and he was a on a fine horse. I was on the best horse in the world, myself. I told the Negro to make it to a certain place, about two or three miles, to where I knew there was a pasture set in and a lane run out to a settlement. I knew if we could beat them to it we could hold 'em up. Well we were riding full 4 speed and I heard something go '[Chug?!]' That negro and his horse went off of a bluff that looked like about twenty feet to the bottom. The bluff was straight up and down. The Negro hollered to me to look out but that horse of mine had already stopped. He had already set his feet on the bank of the bluff and stopped. It never hurt the Negro and his horse very bad but it could have killed them easy.

“On this same stampede, one of the fellows was riding full speed and his horse hit a fence sort of quartering and threw that boy over the fence and on the other side about twenty feet. I was telling Turner Ferguson about it later on and he went off and told some more fellows that he was riding right behind that fellow and saw him leave that horse and straddle the fence and he slid down it for a quarter of a mile, taking fence-posts, stays and everything as he went. One of the fellows said to Turner, 'Why, G—— D——! Did it kill 'im!' Turner said, 'No, it didn't hurt his much; just split him up to his hat band.'

“My mother rode sideways and was always on a horse. She was the best woman-rider I ever saw in my life, in fact she was a better bronc buster than I ever was. The women never rode astraddle but I don't see how in the world they could ever stay on. My mother [never?] was thrown off and she could stay with some pretty bad ones. She had rather

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have seen a horse race than anything on earth. It was all prairie country down there about Seguin, then, for miles and miles. You could see horses running a long ways and there is where we used to catch lots of mustangs.

“There were some good women riders down in Frio County. There used to be a girl who same to every roundup and she was a rider. They had some real roundups down there too. I have seen about one-hundred and fifty men throw together and work clean to San Antonio. We would camp right where Union Stock Yards are now in San Antonio. I have seen as 5 many as of five-thousand cattle thrown together, and the best part of it was they didn't have chuck-wagons then. I never saw a wagon at a roundup till I come to Uvalde County. They were more up-to-date out here. I reckon. I was used to a pack horse outfit. I have seen pack horses cause many a stampede too. He would get the pack under him and stampede the cattle. We used to have fifteen or twenty pack horses on these cow hunts. Each little outfit , like those Germans from Castroville, would have a pack horse to every six or seven men.

“One time we were gathering cattle the other side of Big Foot and somebody had a wild horse and had him tied to the pack horse and that wild horse stampeded the pack horse and they run right down the country as hard as they could go necked together. After awhile they just straddled a tree one went on one side of tree and the other horse went on the other. It killed 'em both deader'n heck.

“Along about then, I stayed with Big Foot Wallace a year. Somebody bought all the land in there out his tract of land was right in the middle of it. He was getting old and they were stealing his stuff from him so I stayed there. He was an awful good friend of my stepfather's.

“Once a storm came up and it was the darndest rain I ever saw. We were sleeping in a wagon, and two elm trees blew down right across the wagon and broke the wagon-bows and tore through the wagon sheet. He was naturally a wicked old man and when this

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happened, he just lay there and hollered and cussed. But I got out of there. He left those trees across that wagon four or five days.

“Old Big Foot used to dress in buckskins but he finally got to wearing duckin's. Once he went to San Antonio and some outfit dressed him up and let him look at himself and he didn't know which one he was. And when I saw him I didn't even recognize him. Whenever he went down there to San 6 Antonio he would take a little fire-weed and make himself some coffee right there on the plaza. He always carried his coffee pot with him. If the police arrested him, he didn't care. They would turn him loose.

“One time we was on a roundup down below where Lytle is now. There was a big outfit of us. One night, one of the boys got cut off from us and the next morning he come in and says, 'Boys, I seen something I never seen before in my life. I rode up to a house this morning “a bunch of men and a woman come loping out of the house on their all-fours barkin' like dogs. The man and his wife appeared to be smart people but all the children were that way except one boy.’ That old boy said he couldn't believe his eyes when those grown men and that grown woman come out at him like that and that it was all he could do to keep from breaking away from there in a run.

“I had always fooled with race horses from the time I was a kid so I naturally took to catching mustangs that I wanted. We'd set a loop for them at a water hole and I remember one time Ben Blalock and we were after a mustang. Sam got up in the tree and [we had?] some hands got after this mustang. He got cut off from his bunch and got with our saddle horses. We run 'em under this tree where Sam was and he snared him..

“I have known those mustangs in Frio county to go clear to the Medina River after water — about thirty miles — and come back right to their range. I have seen two and three bunches run together. I don't guess there were over thirty or forty head in a bunch but there would be plenty of bunches. About the prettiest mustang stallion I ever saw was a blood-red with black tail and main. I believe he was the prettiest horse I ever saw. He

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had a big bunch with him. About the prettiest paint horse I ever saw was caught with a bunch of mustangs below [?]. He was branded, which [?] showed that he had got with the mustangs and run wild. As soon as he was roped, he give up quick and we found that he was already broke and a good saddle 7 horse.

“When those stallions would meet and get to fighting, it was worth seeing. They bit, pawed and kicked and I tell you when they got a good kick in with those feet, it meant business.

“I think it was in '86 when I moved to Uvalde. I helped take a herd of cattle up in about Kerrville on Johnson Creek and when I quit the outfit, I come back to Uvalde horseback. I stayed here awhile and went down and got my cattle and moved 'em up here. I worked on the George Houston ranch, called the Frio ranch then. My brother was running their [?] ranch or the [?] D. My sister and her husband were living up there too and they sent back to Guadalupe County for a teacher for their children. She was Miss Sarah Charles. I had seen h er but I wasn't acquainted with her. But it never did take me long to get acquainted with a young lady, you know. So I went to see her regular and we married in 1890. We drove down to Seguin and got married and come back to the ranch. The first thing I remember seeing when we got to the house and lit the lamp was a quart of whiskey sitting up on the mantel-board that old Captain Dye had sent out. [?] and others had sent other things and we got several nice presents. Uvalde was the nearest place from that ranch — about seven miles. I think we must have been there about two years before we moved to the old Benson ranch.

“Ike Bryor bought the old [7D?] ranch on the [?] and the company sold out. When I moved up to the old Benson ranch above Uvalde, I fenced in about 24,000 acres of land and I lived there till it sold. All our children were born there except our daughter, Edith. Then I moved up on the Dry Frio. I leased the Bailey ranch and lived there awhile. I was dealing in cattle all the time. After I leased that ranch, the well went dry. I 8 went down and bought a place west of town but durned if that well didn't go dry too. That was some drought that

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year. We moved to Uvalde then and the town well went dry. I think they connected up with Tom [?] well and got water for the town.

"I bought cattle for lots of the old timers. I bought them for Tom McNelly and others but most of my buying was for the company I worked for — maybe eight or ten-thousand head a year. I used to buy lots of yearlings every spring starting up at the head of the [Neuces?] and coming down this way till I had between 2,500 and 3,000 head. I had to cut and pass on every one of the different bunches.

"Now, catching those old outlaw steers in the brush took a good roper. Hy Bowles was awful good with a rope but I tell you a good roper that I liked his style and that was Bill Patterson. He used his rope like I did. He never did swing [?] rope right up to the animal and put it on him. I had a Mexican that was about as good fore-footing an animal as John Bleeker was. He never did fail. Everett Johnson said there never was but one man that could go 'round him in the brush after a steer and that was old Alf Tollett. But, gosh! Old Alf was the best cowhand that ever was in the brush.

"Everett Johnson was my brother-in-law and when they sold out that old Cross S ranch, southwest of Uvalde, they sold Everett, John Bleeker and Ed English and H.E. Johnson the remnant of the cattle, a thousand head of saddle horses, six mules and two wagons for \$12,000. Well, there were some real old outlaw steers in there that nobody had ever been able to bring out of there. They were aged steers and as wild and mean as you could find. Those boys went in there and gathered between five and six-thousand head of cattle, but they had to rope 2,300 head of old steers and bulls and tie 'em to the [meeking?] steers and bring 'em out 9 there. They had about forty head of meeking steers and there were about eight or ten men roping this aged stuff and were paid by the head. Everett was a good rider and roper and he was trained in the brush. You have to learn to nearly be a part of your horse. I never carried over a twenty-five foot rope. You had no use for it in the brush. I knew nobody could out-rope me very bad in the brush for I never failed to get 'em, but John Bleeker was the best roper in that part of the country. He could fore-foot 'em



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coming either way. I couldn't do that; they had to be coming all the same way. But John could catch a calf from one side or throw it on the other side and get the one coming from the other way — either way, it didn't matter.

“We caught one old steer down on the Tom McNelly ranch that was 15 years old. Tom said he knew it had been 14 years since he had put that brand on for he didn't keep that brand up any more after that. That old steer weighed about 1,400 pounds. He had got so smart he could out-smart us and he was an outlaw right. We had been after that steer about seven or eight years when we'd round up. He would lie in a thicket like a hog and never make a sound. No, that mounted steerhead over there on the wall wasn't him; that's a Gus Black steer. He was another outlaw and when they caught 'im, they sold 'im to the butcher in Eagle Pass. They had the head mounted and when we bought that market, the steer-head went with it.

“You were speaking about that old “terrapiin' brand I used to run. That was one I figured up on the old Benson ranch. That iron ought be hanging up in the fork of a live-oak tree right no. I believe I could go right there and find it.

“I've got the record for branding in Uvalde or anywhere else. I branded out 1,213 head of big steers in about three and a-half hours.

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I branded 'em out through the shoot, that's true, but old Captain Lytle said that beat any record he ever saw. We put the brand [77?] on every one of them steer.

“About twelve miles above Indian Creek, we bought a little place and kept it stocked with goats and cattle. We moved to Uvalde in about '98 and kept the ranch and [?] place going. We lived there in town over twenty years, or until we moved over her twelve years ago. I had started in partnership with Pete Walcott down at Laredo handling steers. That was when the slump hit and we had been offered \$10,000 for our trade after we bought them cattle but Pete didn't want to sell, so the slump hit and we sure lost. We figured they was

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worth \$20,000 more than we give for 'em. I shipped a train load of those pretty, black cattle from down there to St. Jo and got about three cents (per lb.) for them. We had about 76,000 acres of good range and I spent about two years down there. I told a fellow the other day when he asked me how old I was that I was 73 not counting those two years I spent down there. If you want to know whether a fellow is crooked or straight, just be partners with him. Old Pete is a great fellow — I'd love to see him. He's honest, too.

“We have three children living. They are: Harper, Lawrence and Edith. Allen died a few years ago. Lawrence and I are managing this ranch down here and I like the place pretty well. Just got the house completed and moved into it about three weeks ago.

“I ride every day and enjoy it. I couldn't be idle as long as I can go. But, I've found out one thing; I'm too old to break horses and aint smart enough to teach school so I don't know what I'll do at the last. Well, I believe that barbecue is about done, Florencia, so we better go sample it. Next time you come, we'll sure have a big pot of son-of-a-gun.”

-[30?]-